

6/28/78 *P Argentina R*
WASHINGTON OFFICE ON LATIN AMERICA

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AR 127

June 28th, 1978

Senator Edward Kennedy
431 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
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Exemption(s): _____
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() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to _____
Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

Dear Senator Kennedy:

We have reviewed recent information, and sadly concluded that without a doubt violations of human rights in Argentina continue unabated. In a few short paragraphs we will try to describe the magnitude of these violations and why, in our opinion, they warrant the legal designation "consistent pattern of gross violations."

1. Violations of human rights of persons previously imprisoned without accusation of any crime continues. Amnesty International claims that from 8,000 to 10,000 persons are officially detained. Of those, only 800 have had a legal accusation made against them. Another 500 have been accused by military tribunals or "war councils," where no defense is permitted. Government lists include the names of only 3,500, although many thousands more are known to be in prisons because relatives have visited them.
2. In addition to these 10,000, between 15,000 and 25,000 persons are known to have been secretly detained by security forces. Many are presumed dead. In most cases, there are first person accounts documenting their abduction.
3. At present there are 49 known concentration camps in Argentina (Amnesty International counts 60). Some of those who have been incarcerated there have escaped or been released, and have recounted their stories. On many occasions, persons presumed dead have been seen in these camps. The government has yet to acknowledge the existence of the camps, however.
4. Approximately 8,000 persons have been killed. Even minimal information of their fate has been denied their families.
5. Torture still continues in all detention centers.
6. The killing of prisoners still continues, or prisoners are sometimes released, only to disappear into secret detention. Often their bodies are not returned to their families.
7. Kidnappings by paramilitary groups show no signs of abating. In fact, the frequency increased during May and June of this year. Security forces, in white Torino police cars and equipped with walkie-talkies, are almost invariably associated with the kidnappings. Local police forces usually cooperate, and both groups operate with total immunity.

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8. When parents are detained, their children are frequently taken from them and forced into state orphanages. In the majority of cases, no effort is made to return the children, nor to notify the family of their whereabouts.

9. The intimidation of relatives and friends who seek news of their loved ones has increased. Since December, many mothers of prisoners or detained persons have been kidnapped or secretly detained themselves.

10. The policy of secret detention, torture, and the disposal of the bodies continues. For example, in Bahia Blanca near the seacoast, 22 bodies of women were discovered in February of this year.

To conclude, it is important to point out that General Videla cultivates an image of being a moderate, holding the center line between two extremes. There is no serious evidence that he has done anything to prevent the current violations of human rights. Even if his intentions are good (which we doubt), if he cannot control the situation, should he continue to govern? Would it not be better if he were a "hardliner" who controlled the situation, rather than have Argentina live under the current anarchy? Today, if a relative disappears there is no higher responsible authority to go to for information. President Videla would only say that he knows nothing, but that he is doing his best. The MOST demoralizing factor in Argentina is that for thousands of families, there is simply no information on missing family members and no way to get it!

Attached are some documents which may be of some help.

Sincerely,

Joseph T. Eldridge
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